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Church and Society: New Frameworks, New Arenas

Indonesia and East Timor: Agenda for Peace and Reconciliation

Frontiers in Christian Mission: Theological Roundtable

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EDITORIAL

The last meeting of the Executive Committee in early November fully cleared the way for the Eleventh General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia. Unless there is some major obstacle that we cannot now anticipate, the Assembly will be held 1–6 June 2000, in Tomohon, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The Pre-Assembly gatherings of Youth, Women and the Urban Rural Mission will be held 27–30 May in the area around Tomohon.

The Assembly will have two parts. The first will be an extraordinary Assembly that will deal with the 'Vision and Structure' report that proposes a new program structure for the CCA and some proposed constitutional amendments that have been drawn up by the Constitutional Review Committee. Both of these sets of proposals will come to the Assembly after over two years of discussion and preparation that involved the various leadership bodies of the CCA, two committees that have been appointed to draft them, consultations and comments from various advisers and after study and comment by the member churches and councils. The second part of the Assembly will be the regular Assembly. It will deliberate primarily on priorities, concerns and programs and set up the organisational machinery and leadership that will help propel CCA in the new term and as we move into a new century. The thematic centre around which this propulsion into the new term will take place will be the 'fullness of life for all'. Drawn from the words of Jesus as recorded in John 10:10, the theme will be discussed in the Assembly. The sub-themes are 'For Such Time as This: Our Movement in God's Time', which will reflect on the meaning of our time within the spectrum of God's time as we move into a new millennium, 'Towards New Communities for the New Millennium', which will reflect on what 'for all' means for human life and community, and 'Inclusive Societies in a Pluralistic World', which will reflect on the challenge of inclusiveness and plurality as constructive characteristics of social life in the future.

In deciding to return to Tomohon, Indonesia, we return to 'roots'. Over forty years ago, amidst the challenges and uncertainties of the post-Second World War and the post-Colonial period, the CCA was founded in Prapat, Indonesia. It was the first regional ecumenical organisation in the modern period of the ecumenical movement. Something of this historical perspective will be an important dimension of the Eleventh Assembly. Of greater importance, however, is that we meet in Indonesia at this time. Tomohon is almost literally in the bosom of one of the Indonesian churches. Meeting in Tomohon, amidst the smouldering embers of the crisis that has overcome Indonesian society in recent months, will be for some a risky if not foolhardy decision. For us it will be a 'sign' and 'symbol' of the miracle of God's grace and of confidence in the capacity of people for renewal and reconciliation in this still troubled part of our region. Indeed, as I noted in my report to the Executive Committee, if there ever was a time in which we should be meeting in Indonesia, that time is now. It is as good a way as any of affirming confidence in the future, as we enter into a new century and a new millennium.

We wish you God's peace and prosperity as we welcome the New Year.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Church and Society

New frameworks, new arenas for Asian churches

The call from the Asian Conference on Church and Society was for the ecumenical movement to confront local realities, not with a broad sweep, but with a great appreciation of the nuances of Asia's diversity, at a time when old frameworks have disintegrated and globalisation is leaving even deeper marks.

Organised by the Christian Conference of Asia, the conference brought together forty-four theologians, church workers and social scientists, mostly from Asia and Australia, to draw up an agenda for the ecumenical movement in Asia. Held in Darwin, Australia, 23–29 September 1999, the conference was conceived as having 'special significance' among CCA's various initiatives to revitalise the ecumenical movement in the region.

Resource persons and workshop groups identified and analysed a broad range of critical issues, including

globalisation, neo-liberalism, religious pluralism and the environmental crisis. Strong resistance to globalisation, because of its impact on human beings and the environment, was underscored by keynote speaker and sociologist Dr Randolph David, as well as by other resource speakers and working groups. Indian ecumenist Dr K.C. Abraham noted the need to continue the search for a global order where life-affirming values are preserved and strengthened. He characterised this as an environment of 'people-friendly markets', 'enabling social changes' and 'post-modern humanism'. Briefings on the situation in each country, particularly those in the working group on church and civil society, provided handles to better understand Asian social dynamics.

Rather than approach globalisation as a negative force, conference participants exhibited greater openness to en-



gage it. 'Many of the old presuppositions and intellectual arrangements have been overthrown by the economic agenda of the world, the prevailing chasm between rich and poor, the irrelevance of old dogmatic and ideological systems,' said Dr Albert van den Heuvel, president of the World Association for Christian Communication. 'Much of what we are and much of our agenda have to be reinvented. Traditions have become 'free contributions' to those meetings, making them more important rather than less important: what loses its ideological format can now be freely used.'

Discussions on the new world of communication concluded that despite the dangers of computer technology, group access to the Internet must be advocated as essential as access to libraries. Similarly, there was a recommendation for churches to dialogue with state actors towards adopting a stronger stance against foreign control by mul-

tilateral institutions, including the World Trade Organisation. A working group pointed out that some congregations do have bureaucrats and political actors as members, and could therefore make dialogue with government a possibility.

Some participants, however, expressed reservations about the strategy, saying that WTO mechanisms themselves limit the ability of Asian governments to control foreign investment. It was observed that beyond involvement in social movements of women and the environment, Asian churches need to look at how they have responded to the workers and urban poor groups most affected by the new flexible employment terms aimed at global competitiveness.

Although most of the lectures and the workshops were helpful in describing the myriad manifestations of old and new societal problems in the era of globalisation, there



Three generations of CCA leadership: Mathews George Chunakara, Kang Moon Kyu, Feliciano Cariño, Park Sang Jung, Rienzie Perera, Ahn Jae Woong, K.C. Abraham



Prof. Randolph David



Margaret Rodgers, Feliciano Cariño

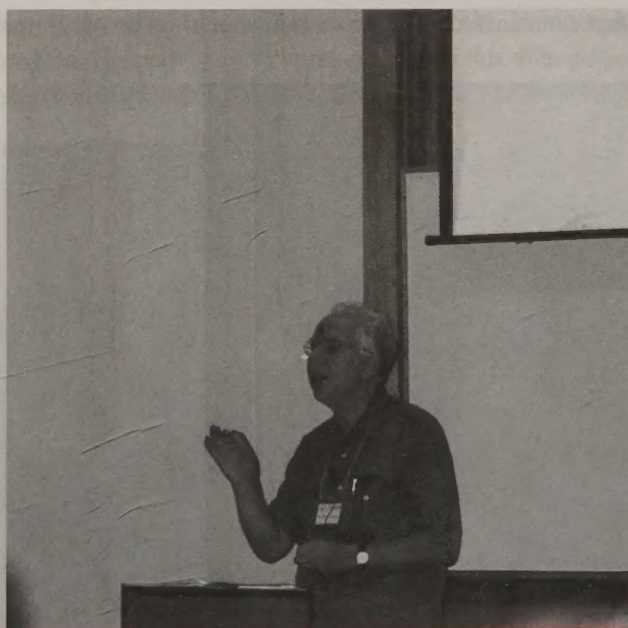
appeared no consensus on how to do analysis. There was a conscious effort to draw the workshops towards theologising.

Rather than lay down a new theology, the discussions reiterated the need to rethink Christian doctrine, exegesis and missiology to elaborate new ecumenical and theological approaches and perspectives on issues of church and society, and even a new vision of society itself.

Working group recommendations were directed at bringing Christian social thought down to earth and in knowing how churches are responding to the issues. There was a high demand for a follow through in the form of social research and case studies. Working groups used experiences of how the grassroots and local congregations resolve conflicts, including religious, cultural and gender issues, how hope is created in the resolution of conflicts including gen-



Dr Kang Moon Kyu



Dr Albert van den Heuvel



der issues and how society, democratisation and successful communication models have impact on church and religion.

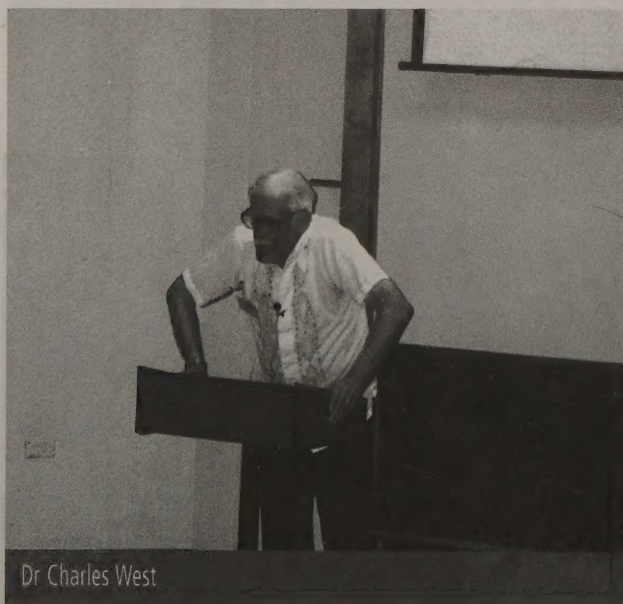
There were repeated calls for churches to study the results of their ministries as well as the need to heal human relationships within the church itself. While this was so, gender was a sore spot in the conference itself.

For Rev. Ann Wansbrough, if there was a single voice that summarised what the church should be doing, it was

that of Dean John Titaley, an Indonesian theologian. During a working group meeting on civil society and during plenary sessions, Titaley called on Asian churches to help 'take away the fear' of the people in Maluku and its capital, Ambon.

He expressed apprehensions that Ambon was going to be the next target of massive right-wing violence in Indonesia. 'The people of Ambon need action,' he said.

Sophie Lizares-Bodegon



Dr Charles West



Ebenezer Joseph

Indonesia and East Timor

Churches set agenda for peace and reconciliation

Twenty-four church leaders and representatives of churches from Indonesia, East Timor and partner churches and mission agencies from the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Australia and Hong Kong met 12–14 November 1999 at a roundtable in Hong Kong to discuss the current crisis in Indonesia. The three days consultation included staff of CCA, WCC and a resource person from Indonesia. It was convened by the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches in co-operation with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI).

The roundtable meeting began with worship, then Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary of CCA, addressed the opening session. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, Executive Secretary for International Affairs of CCA,

briefed the participants on the background and the purpose of the meeting. Mr Clement John, Executive Secretary of WCC, reviewed the history of ecumenical involvement in East Timor and Indonesia.

The CCA and WCC have closely monitored the developments in Indonesia since the May 1998 downfall of President Suharto's regime. Through visits of international ecumenical delegations and nearly daily consultation, CCA and WCC have followed the situation in Indonesia with growing concern. The deteriorating situation in Indonesia has resulted in political instability, communal violence, human rights violations against the Chinese ethnic minority and atrocities committed by the military against the people of East Timor and Irian Jaya. The post-referendum killings and destruction of

property in East Timor and the increasing incidences of Christian–Muslim clashes that have resulted in wanton killings and burning of places of worship in Ambon are also matters of urgent concern for the ecumenical fellowship.

The roundtable's purpose was to listen and learn:

- from the leaders of Indonesian and East Timor churches about recent developments, and to understand how these developments have affected churches and Christians in Indonesia and East Timor,
- about the role of the PGI in the present crisis and to determine the role expected of international ecumenical partners and churches as they accompany the Indonesian churches through this difficult period of history.



The resource person, Mr Sabam Saigian, guided the participants through the political history of Indonesia—from the role Suharto played in changing the face of the country (and in the process the unleashing of social and political forces that he was unable to comprehend) to his downfall and the emergence of political Islam that has put into place President Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as 'Gus Dur', and Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

For the first time in its 54-year history, the Republic of Indonesia has gone through a process of democratic and orderly transition of leadership in accordance with its constitution. According to Sabam Saigian, a member of the Peoples Consultative Assembly representing the Indonesian Association of Christian Intelligentsia, the prevailing wisdom is that the election of Gus Dur as President, despite his failing health, was a political necessity to ensure national unity.

While Indonesia has successfully managed this first critical step, the social and political landscape of the



Sabam Saigian

country remains precarious. Rev. Dr Joseph Pattiasina, General Secretary of the PGI, spoke about the response of the national body to the situations in Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya. The participants were told how PGI has struggled to address the recent crisis.



The leadership of the Communion of Churches made several public pronouncements on the crisis in Ambon, East Timor and Irian Jaya and have also taken up these concerns with government officials.

Mathews George Chunakara

Recommendations

East Timor

- Churches and ecumenical fellowships should assist the people and churches of East Timor in their efforts for reconstruction and promoting peace and reconciliation.
- Humanitarian assistance to East Timor should be coordinated and an appropriate mechanism should be set up to channel aid to the churches in the territory, particularly by the GKTT (East Timor Christian Church). Given that at present there is no proper

mechanism to coordinate international support, the roundtable recommends that the WCC should convene an East Timor roundtable meeting of partners for ecumenical sharing of resources.

- Since its inception, GKTT, being in the territorial jurisdiction of Indonesia, was a member of PGI. The vote for independence has radically changed that situation. GKTT now has to reconsider its relationship with PGI and further re-establish its identity in a predominantly Roman Catholic East Timor. It is

recommended that GKTT be enabled by the international ecumenical partners to achieve this goal.

- PGI should encourage and support GKTT to develop and grow as an independent administrative entity in order to gain credibility in the new political ethos of East Timor.
- The members of the roundtable appreciated the statement of Rev. Francisco de Vasconcelos, General Secretary of GKTT, which emphasised continued good relations with the Indonesian churches. The roundtable participants also welcomed the announcement of the General Secretary that GKTT will seek CCA membership.

Ambon

- The ecumenical partners should assist the Protestant churches in the Moluccas in their efforts to settle the internally displaced people in the region.
- The PGI, WCC and CCA, as well as other partner churches and agencies, should initiate steps through visitations and consultations to find ways to defuse conflict and tension between Christians and Muslims in the region and to help promote peace and reconciliation between the two communities.
- The ecumenical partners should encourage and support the efforts of the Protestant Church in the Moluccas to enter into inter-religious dialogue to promote communal harmony and peace.
- The WCC and CCA should coordinate efforts to provide assistance for the victims of communal violence and help in the process of rebuilding homes for those rendered homeless.
- The WCC and CCA should send as soon as possible an international ecumenical delegation on a pastoral visit to Ambon. Members of the delegation should include experts in inter-religious relations and be knowledgeable about Islam.
- The international ecumenical community should help in the setting up of model 'peace villages' where Muslims and Christians may live in harmony.

Irian Jaya

- The PGI, in cooperation with the Evangelical Chris-

tian Church, should as soon as possible convene a consultation that brings together leaders of church and society as well as legal and political experts to discuss the future political status of Irian Jaya.

- PGI should initiate roundtable discussions in Jakarta to focus on the issue of Irian Jaya and, in consultation with the Evangelical Christian Church, formulate a policy statement that reflects the aspirations of the people of Irian Jaya.
- The roundtable noted with concern the report of the Evangelical Christian Church in Irian Jaya about the growing influence of Islam in the region as a result of the transmigration policies of the government. This is leading to conflict among people. It is recommended that PGI take up this issue with the authorities concerned.
- PGI and the Evangelical Christian Church should undertake a joint study of the new law relating to regional autonomy and submit its comments to the authorities concerned.
- The international ecumenical community should channel aid to Irian Jaya through the Evangelical Christian Church in order to ensure proper coordination and utilisation of resources.
- Given the tense situation in the territory, WCC, CCA and PGI should continue to monitor developments through regular visits and consultations.

Chinese Ethnic Minority

- It is proposed that PGI should organise a consultation in Jakarta in cooperation with the Chinese Church in Indonesia on 'Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Their Aspiration for Nationhood'.

Aceh

- The roundtable discussed the deteriorating situation in Aceh and proposed that the Church in North Sumatra closely monitor the situation of refugees. The ecumenical movement should express its concern and solidarity with the Muslims of Aceh and make it known that the churches condemn the human rights violations committed by the military and that they are in solidarity with the victims.

Frontiers in Christian Mission

Theological roundtable explores mission and missiology in the new millennium

The Mission and Evangelism Desk of the Christian Conference of Asia, in collaboration with the Council for World Mission (CWM), sponsored the 'Frontiers in Christian Mission' Roundtable at the Chinese YMCA in Hong Kong, 11–17 November 1999. Forty-eight missiologists from all over gathered to explore issues related to mission and missiology in the new millennium. The program format consisted of five areas:

- A Theological and Biblical Framework for Conceiving World Mission Today (Presenters: Dr Archie Lee, Dr Faitala Talapusi, Fr Gianni Criveller. Drafters: Dr Preman Niles, Dr Brigitta Larsson)
- The Challenge of Other Faiths for Christian Mission: God's People in the Midst of All God's Peoples (Presenters: Prof. David Kerr, Dr Damayanthi Niles, Dr Felix Wilfred.



Moderators: Dr Wong Wai Ching and Dr Soritua Nababan

Drafters: Dr Wesley Ariarajah, Dr George Mulrain)

- Mission as Engagement in Society: Models for Social Thought and Action (Presenters: Sr Theresa Lowe Ching, Mr Mark Yettica-Paulson, Dr Nestor Miguez. Drafters: Dr K.C. Abraham, Ms Rosaline Paul)
- Mission and the Challenge of the New World of Technology (Presenters: Prof. Bert Hoedemaker, Dr Kim

Yong-bock. Drafters: Dr George Evers, Dr Francis Brien)

- Proclamation, Church, Unity: A Joint Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant Position on World Mission Today (Presenters: Dr K.M. George, Dr Melba Magay, Fr Fung Jee-Vui. Drafters: Dr Tom Michel, Dr Philip Wickeri)

Dr Soritua Nababan, Dr Wong Wai Ching and Dr Park Sang Jung served as moderators for the sessions. Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, Executive Secretary of Mission and Evangelism, led the group in daily worship and biblical reflections based on the themes. Ms Heddy Ha, Administrative Assistant, was in charge of the practical arrangements of the program.

It is believed that the outcome of this roundtable will be a primary input for consideration of the next Assembly of the CCA in Tomohon, Indonesia, in June 2000.

Daniel Thiagarajah



Dr Preman Niles and Dr Feliciano Cariño

Presenters at the 'Frontiers in Christian Mission' Roundtable



Dr Damayanthi Niles



Mark Yeltica Paulson



Dr Melba Maggay, Dr Park Sang Jung, Dr Soritua Nababan



Fr Felix Wilfred, Dr Wong Wai Ching, Dr Soritua Nababan



Dr Kim Yong Bock



Dr Faitala Talapuri

'Frontiers in Christian Mission' Roundtable Report

The Way Forward: Challenges Facing the Church in Mission

As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, about forty of us of from different cultural and confessional backgrounds came together at a Theological Roundtable in Hong Kong (10–17 November 1999) to reflect together on what the churches' mission might mean in our day, and what challenges lie ahead in the new period. A full report of the meeting will come later. Here we articulate some of the challenges and convictions that surfaced in our discussions of the 'Frontiers in Christian Mission' that need further study and exploration in the years ahead:

- 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,' said the risen Christ to his disciples (Acts 1:8). Mission is an inalienable part of the meaning of being the church in the world. We remember with gratitude the generations of Christians who had been faithful witnesses to the message of the Gospel, both in word and deed. The word 'mission', however, poses problems to many of our churches because of its close association with colonialism, and the enormous injustices that had been committed against peoples and cultures during the colonial expansion. Therefore, we recognise the need to speak of mission both in ways that

name and reject the wrongs of the past, and in ways that embrace what was good. Today we affirm mission as Christian witness and service that brings healing and wholeness into the lives of peoples. And we fix our eyes not on the past, but on the future, so 'let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12:1–2).

- Our affirmations about mission are rooted in our Trinitarian faith, and on the conviction that God creates, cares for, heals and restores the world. It is also based on our belief that God intends to bring all things unto Godself, and that we have been called to be partners and co-workers with God in setting up the Reign of God over all of life. The Spirit of God is at work in creation, in its plural manifestation, and in all places where true healing, reconciliation and restoration take place. Further, we discern the work of the Spirit in the lives of people when the fruit of the Spirit is evident. We recognise that an important part of our mission is to discern the Spirit at work in the world, and to participate in it as witnesses to God's justice and love. It is the Triune God who sends us in mission. A Trinitarian vision of

mission, based on the work of the Holy Spirit as the agent of mission, needs further reflection and elaboration. This is a crucial task, especially in view of the fact that there are deep differences among Christians on the discernment of the Spirit and the criteria for such discernment.

- We draw our inspiration to speak about God the Creator, Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit from the Bible, an enduring source and authority of faith through the centuries. The Bible is central to our Christian identity and faith, and yet we are only too aware that there is little agreement among Christians on the nature of its authority and how the biblical witness to God and God's relationship to the world is to be interpreted. We affirm the richness and diversity of the Bible and the many traditions of its interpretation. We are convinced, however, that the Bible becomes the living 'Word of God' only in so far as its message is appropriated in context. There are many visions of mission in the Bible. We need to develop a new 'hermeneutics of mission' which allows us to move back and forth between the context and the scripture in a responsible and transforming interaction with the world. We are also convinced that the fullness of the meaning of mission is to be sought not in se-

lected verses of the Bible, but in its totality.

- We feel the need to reconsider the way we have looked at other religious traditions. We recognise that the colonial context and the cultural insensitivity that accompanied much of colonial history have influenced some of the dominant negative attitudes to other religious traditions. Recognising that God has not left Godself without witness at any time or among any people, we affirm the need to respect and listen to the witness others give to their life with God and to God's life with them. We are in mission, not as aliens and strangers, but as fellow-pilgrims, and as God's people among all God's peoples, always ready 'to give an account of the hope that is in us'. It is our firm belief that the Holy Spirit is active in the world that opens us to peoples of different cultures and religions both to discern God at work and to cooperate with them in furthering the Reign of God over all of life.
- We recognise the plurality and the dynamism of the cultures we come from. These cultures have shaped us, and we see the diverse cultural contexts as the only possible starting points of mission. The Gospel message is always clothed in a culture and received within a culture. And yet, we are aware of the ambiguity of all cultures, and the reality that, increasingly, persons and communities live in and are shaped by more than one culture. We be-

lieve in the power of the Gospel to challenge, transform and confirm cultures, and in the inherent potential in all cultures to give shape and meaning to the Gospel that makes the message relevant to peoples' lives. All cultures and nations are under the judgment of God. While accepting and affirming our cultural diversity and differences, we also affirm the power of the Gospel to help us cross boundaries that divide us, and of our own need to develop the capacities and the spirituality necessary to serve and give witness to the Gospel across cultural boundaries.

- We are, however, deeply concerned with the rise of a culture in our day that presents, promotes and fosters an alternative vision of life that holds power and wealth as the ultimate and legitimate ends of life. This idolatry of Mammon, and the rationality on which it is built, finds its expression as a pervasive culture promoted through much of the mass media. It creates and maintains unjust relations, and promotes an ideology, both in theories and practices, that elevates the 'Market', both economic and financial, as the supreme goal, and the panacea for all evils—personal, social or global. This is the context of our mission today. The processes of globalisation link people across the globe, and offer fascinating new possibilities to transmit knowledge, to express solidarity and to share the resources of the earth. But it has also been used and abused in ways

that devastate the environment and impoverish and exclude large sections of humanity. Similarly, new technological innovations hold out many new promises, and yet there is deep ethical concern about the uses to which they are put, and about tampering with the very building blocks of life, with unknown consequences to the well-being of nature and of future generations. These new contexts of our life, and the complexities and ambiguities they present, constitute a massive new missionary challenge to the church, both to critically engage the powers and structures, and to practice mission, where appropriate, as resistance, protest, advocacy, and as solidarity with those that have been marginalised.

- We proclaim healing and wholeness in the Triune God. Yet, we are struck by the realisation that the mission of the church is both hindered and impoverished by its divisions, its incapacity to speak with one voice against the evil powers of our day, and its inability to demonstrate its mission of reconciliation through its own reconciled eucharistic life. Mission presupposes a healing community in each and every place that would bear witness to the truth that the Gospel has the power to heal, restore and renew life, and to establish justice in community. The churches' mission of proclamation receives its credibility through the affirmation of life, and life affirmed in a reconciled community.

That They Might Be One

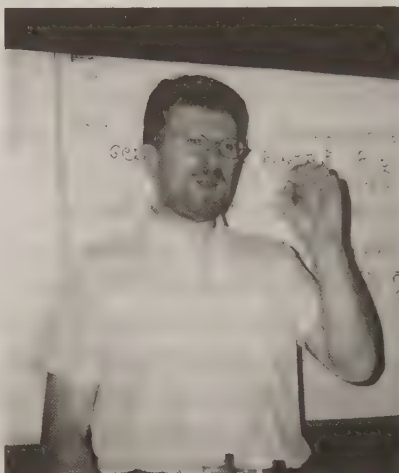
Leadership development training in Cambodia focuses on church unity

That They Might Be One' was the title of the Leadership Development Workshop, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 27–29 September, under the auspicious of the CCA Indochina desk. Church leaders from the provinces of Cambodia as well as from churches within Phnom Penh participated in the workshop.

The situation of the churches in Cambodia continues to be one of frailty and difficulty. Pastors are subject to influences from outside Cambodia. These influences seek to exert control of the activities of the churches there by means of finance and theology or because of outside history. This has resulted in a breakdown in relationships between church communities and an increase in denominationalism.

The workshop explored the unity and mission of the church from the perspectives of the New Testament and the ecumenical movement. The goal of the workshop was awareness raising and relationship development between the pastors, young people and leaders who attended. The workshop was structured on an action-reflection model. Rev. John Gilmore, Moderator of the CCA Indochina program, provided study materials.

The central sessions focused on the perspectives of some of the writers of the New Testament. Themes were from Matthew ('Households of Justice'), Luke ('Signs of the Kingdom'), Paul ('Communities of Reconciliation') and



John Gilmore leads a session

John ('United in Word and Deed'). The final two sessions focused on the history and formation of the ecumenical movement.

Throughout the workshop and in each session a repeated question was, 'What does this mean for the churches of Cambodia?' There were many op-

portunities for discussion in response to the sessions. The result of the workshop was an increased desire to cooperate with other churches and a realisation that the witness to the Christian message of hope and grace is easily undermined by a lack of unity and lack of respect among church communities. A second outcome was a greater awareness gained not only from the New Testament's emphasis on unity, but also from the contribution of the ecumenical movement in building church unity. The participants agreed that some of the issues they identified as impediments to the unity of the churches should become focuses for the Executive Committee of KCC. Finally, the workshop was valuable for the participants' deepening of relationships among church leaders and pastors who did not attend.

John Gilmore



Workshops on Worship and Curriculum of Christian Education in the Context of Asian Plurality

One of the major characteristics of Asian society is plurality. There is a plurality of religions, cultures, races, ethnicity, languages and ideologies. There is also plurality even within the Asian faith community, as indicated by Asia's variety of denominational groupings, theologies and church confessions, as well as liturgical and ritual practices. These different experiences encourage people to develop different perspectives and understandings of common issues. Even when reading something held in common, such as the Christian scriptures, the understandings are different, for they are affected by the readers' different backgrounds, experiences and social locations.

While there exist positive features of cooperation and mutual enrichment among different groups in the community, there are prejudices that hinder fuller collaboration, mutual recognition and enrichment among people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, gender, age and perspective preferences.

To highlight some of them:

- We find in our Asian reality growing tensions and conflicts among different ethnic and religious groups. Examples of these tensions are the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, religious conflict between the Hindu and Islamic communities in India and between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia and the Philippines, to name a few.
- There is discrimination against women and children in all aspects of community life.
- There is intolerance against people who have different perspectives.
- There are growing exclusive tendencies of churches in Asia regarding the way they look at other denominations and faiths.

How does the church respond to the issue of plurality in a more creative and inclusive way that will contribute to a holistic and integrated witness of the church? How do we as churches, along with many other faiths in Asia,

become agents of God in the process of making one people of God and in promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation? How do we nurture inclusive attitudes through the curriculum of Christian education?

Asian churches are therefore challenged to:

- reconsider their educational programs and worship life in order to respond to the call for an integrated and holistic witness in Asia,
- re-evaluate the exclusive way of understanding the realities and mission of the church evident in creeds, teaching materials, sermons, liturgies, rituals and practices,
- enable the members to read the Scripture in a dynamic interaction with the social realities and to see the interconnectedness of worship, education, mission and community life.

In order to deal with these issues and challenges, the Christian Conference of Asia held two simultaneous 'Workshops on Worship and Curriculum of Christian Education in the Context of Asian Plurality' in Bali, Indonesia, 20–27 October 1999. There were thirty-two participants, composed of Christian educators, church leaders, women's program enablers, curriculum designers and seminary teachers. They came from thirteen countries of Asia and one from Europe and they were sent by national councils of churches and by the World Council of Churches.



Bali was an appropriate 'learning setting', for not only did it represent the reality of plurality in Indonesia, but also the fact that plurality could be dealt with creatively and positively. At the time of the workshop, the Balinese government was supporting the construction of an inter-religious complex where Bali's five major religious groups could be located side by side: a Muslim mosque, a Roman Catholic church, a Buddhist temple, a Protestant church and a Hindu temple. Furthermore, it was a critical period in the history of Indonesia, as the national government had just held its first democratic presidential elections. It was a timely activity in view of the glaring realities emerging from our Asian pluralities, some of which the participants brought with them.

The workshops were aimed at enabling the participants to:

- be more aware about the reality of Asian plurality and the dynamics and complexity of such a context,
- clarify and promote the notion of 'inclusive community' in the light of biblical understandings and visions and present realities of Asia,
- clarify the understanding of curriculum of Christian education within the framework of inclusive and holistic perspectives and set the 'guiding principles' for such curriculum in the Asian context,
- explore ways and means of nurturing inclusive attitudes among the people as an integral part of living out their faith,
- foster closer relationships for future networking among ecumenical leaders and catalysts.

The participants brought symbols of their work—pieces of cloth and writ-

ten responses to a questionnaire on inclusiveness, energisers (a dozen claps), a cultural presentation—as well as openness to participate in the whole workshop in a meaningful way.

They were also helped in many ways through the worship, Bible studies and presentations by Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat, CCA Associate General Secretary, and Rev. Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, CCA Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism, Dr Samson Prabhakar of United Theological Seminary in Bangalore, and Ms Hope Antone. Topics included 'An Analysis of Asian Society Today and Its Values', 'Emerging Theological and Missiological Discussions in the Context of Asian Plurality', 'Curriculum of Christian Education: Towards Building Up of Inclusive Community', 'Nurturing Inclusive Attitudes: Psycho-social Perspectives' and 'Critical Tools for Developing a Contextual Approach to Christian Ministry'.

As a result of these studies, the participants developed a 'Statement of Concern, Confession and Commitment.'

The Protestant Christian Church in Bali hosted the activity with considerable grace. Participants and resource persons were greeted by Rev. Suyaga Ayub, the General Secretary, blessed with flowers by the women of the church and welcomed by the local churches during the day of community integration. It was a meaningful encounter of people intended at enlivening the ecumenical movement.

The Statement of Concern, Confession and Commitment may be obtained from the CCA Women's Concerns/Education Desk by sending a letter or email.

Corazon Tabing-Reyes

CCA Roundtable Meeting

A roundtable meeting was held in Hong Kong at the Chinese YMCA, 8–10 November 1999 with a number of major traditional ecumenical partners along with members of the Executive Committee of CCA. The first part of the roundtable involved hearing the reports from the General Secretariat. Dr Feliciano V. Cariño gave the General Secretary's report while Associate General Secretaries, Dr Ahn Jae Woong and Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang gave the Financial and Program reports. In the second part of the meeting, partner churches and agencies shared recent trends and developments in their churches and agencies regarding funding policies and priorities of mission work. The third part had more detailed discussions on CCA programs and finance. Then the ecumenical partners pledged their commitment for the work and programs of the CCA. A daily worship was led by Pastor Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Executive Secretary for Women and Education. Rev. Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism, led three biblical reflections on the themes of *koinonia*, *metanoia* and *diakonia* at the start of each day's meeting. The ecumenical partners pledged their support for the 2000 budget. They will meet again in Tomohon, Indonesia, during the General Assembly of the CCA regarding the 2001 budget. It was decided that the next roundtable meeting would be held in Hong Kong, 5–7 November 2001. *Ahn Jae Woong*

CCA Executive Committee Meeting

The CCA Executive Committee met at the Conference Hall of the Asia Alliance YMCA in Hong Kong, 4–6 November 1999. The main agenda of the meeting was to prepare for the Eleventh General Assembly of CCA to be held in Tomohon, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1–6 June 2000, under the theme 'Time for Fullness of Life for All'. The preparation included discussion on the assembly schedules and programs, themes and resource persons, Bible Studies and other aspects of the life and work of the assembly.

The committee spent considerable time discussing proposals to the assembly regarding the 'Vision and Structure' of CCA and constitutional amendments. These proposals are the result of nearly two years of discussion that have involved many people. Member churches and councils were consulted through correspondence, and their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the proposal. The final form of the proposal was circulated to CCA member churches and councils in December 1999.

CCA-URM beyond 2000: From Crisis to Kairos

As the century comes closer to its end, CCA-URM finds itself at a crossroads. Societies, churches, people's movements and URM groups are in crisis, partly because we are in the midst of a paradigm shift all over the world and partly because of internal weaknesses and a changing relationship between churches and URM.

To address these issues, a consultation on 'CCA-URM beyond 2000: From Crisis to Kairos' was held in Bangkok, 1–3 October 1999. Eighteen representatives from Indonesia, Thailand, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, and including three former CCA-URM executive secretaries, attended the workshop. The aims were to discuss the present URM situation, the economic crisis and the rapid changes occurring in Asia. In addition, the workshop tried to define a new role and priorities of URM in the years to come. In his remarks, Rev. In Myung Jin, the moderator of the CCA-URM committee, thanked all participants for their support of the work of URM. He was particularly happy to see 'different generations' of people, especially younger people and women, participating in the meeting.

The workshop consisted of a Bible study led by Rev. Dr A. George Ninan, former Bishop of Nasik, India. Bishop Ninan is also a former Executive Secretary of CCA-URM. Oh Jae Shik, the former CCA-URM Secretary and now the President of World Vision in Ko-

rea, made a presentation of 'The Future of URM, Retrospect and Prospect'. Rajan Singh, the Secretary of NCC-URM India, presented 'Peoples' Challenge to URM'. 'Towards Economic Justice in Asia beyond 2000' was presented by Marisa Guzman, co-teacher with Dr Walden Bello at the University of the Philippines. During the meeting, participants from each country presented synopses of their country's situation and the work of URM in it. On the last day, Noel Villaba led the workshop on the future of URM in Asia.

These were some of the recommendations and conclusions:

- That URM reaffirm its mission and work closely with churches. URM needs to challenge current ideological and theological trends, especially in consideration of the impact of the global market.
- That the struggle for economic justice (especially regarding the impact of debt, globalisation and increasing racial, ethnic and religious conflicts) become the main concern of URM.
- That training and solidarity networking become the priority of the URM program.
- That URM needs to promote young people and women in leadership at all levels of URM in the coming century.

The report of the workshop and the paper may be obtained from the office of CCA-URM by sending a letter or email.

Josef P. Widyatmadja

CCA-FABC Joint Ecumenical Formation

'In today's pluralistic world the ecumenical dialogue cannot avoid a discussion on the efforts of divided churches for unity beyond the differences on the basis of caste, creed, colour, language and nationality ... Unless we work and live as one people from different communities contributing our skills and talents for the welfare of all God's people and for the welfare of the whole creation, our future is bleak.'

—Rt Rev. Dr M. Elia Peter

The first joint CCA and FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences) ecumenical formation program was held at the campus of the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC) in Bangalore, India, 14–30 September 1999. Its theme was 'Towards a Community of Communities'. This program was implemented in cooperation with the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology (ISET) at the ECC.

Rt Rev. Dr M. Elia Peter gave the opening address. Written messages from Bishop John Bosco Manat of Thailand, the Chair of the FABC Office of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs and Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando of Sri Lanka, a member of CCA Presidium were also read during the inaugural ceremony.

The Asia Ecumenical Committee, which met in Bali in January 1998, emphasised the importance of ecumenical formation. It strongly encouraged that an ecumenical formation program, jointly planned and organised by CCA and FABC, should be explored. The program was then developed and participants and resource persons were drawn from the member constituencies of both bodies. Costs were shared.

The result was the program in Bangalore. The course was attended by twenty-eight participants, including church leaders, local pastors, ecumenical workers, youth and women leaders from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia and Indonesia. The participants included people who are directly responsible for the ecumenical relations at the parish, diocese, and denominational levels.

The two weeks intensive encounter provided opportunities for people from local parishes and grassroots levels to understand each other's traditions, to learn from each other and to seek ways to promote Christian unity at the local level

The focal points were Asian ecumenism and inter-religious relationships and cooperation. Topics were facilitated by Rev. Dr Kuncheria Pathil, CMI, Dean of Dharmaram College in India and member of the CCA-FABC Joint Committee. They included: 'Divided Churches in Asia and the

Movement for Unity', 'History of the Ecumenical Movement' and 'Emerging Doctrinal Convergence'. The histories of the ongoing cooperation between CCA and FABC were introduced by Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat from CCA and Br Edmund Chia from FABC. The participants' shared their different ecclesiastical traditions through small-group discussions. The panel discussion on the topic 'Vision for Christian Unity for Asia Today' was enriched by the presence of resource persons, included Rev. D. Paul Puthanangady from the Roman Catholic Church, Rev. Dr O.V. Jathana from the Church of South India and Fr Joey George from the Orthodox Church. The participants from the same or nearby areas also discussed possible ecumenical action programs to promote Christian unity in their own places.

The discussion on inter-religious relationships primarily focused on the resources that can be offered by people of different faith traditions in Asia for creation of community. Participants had the privilege to spend three days with resource persons from other major religions in Asia. These included Mr Swami Hari Das (Hinduism), Prof. Hasan Mansur (Islam), Shri G.

Sudhakar Rao (Buddhism) and Shri Harjinder Singh Bhatia (Sikhism). This section was concluded with an exploration on 'Asian Theology of Religions and Formation for Inter-religious Dialogue' led by Rev. Dr Sebastian Painadath.

The course also included discussions on two other crucial issues. 'Christian Response to Ecological Crisis' was led by Dr George Matthew Nalunnakkal, Secretary for Mission and Evangelism Unit of NCC India. Dr Lellama Athyal, from Gurukul Lutheran Theological Seminary, led the discussion on 'Women's Issues in Asia and the Commitment for a Community of Equals'.

Rev. Dr M.J. Joseph, Director of ECC, and Prof. Dr Joseph Pathrapankal facilitated the Bible Studies during the course. Worship and ecological exposure trips to Buddhavihara, Gurdwara Temple were led by Dr Joseph Patmury, Dean of ISET.

The course concluded with seminars in which each participant presented a paper related to the topic 'New Ways of Being Church in Asia—Towards a New Ecumenical Praxis'. The two weeks intensive encounter provided opportunities for people from local parishes and grassroots levels to understand each other's traditions, to learn from each other and to seek ways to promote Christian unity at the local levels. The participants, through the evaluation at the end of the course, indicated that the course has encouraged them to initiate ecumenical gatherings and inter-religious dialogues in their places. They expressed their commitment for such action.

Henriette Hutabarat

AIDS in Southeast Asia

Training Workshop on Pastoral Ministry on HIV/AIDS Concerns of Churches in the Mekong Sub-region

The Fifth International AIDS Conference, held in Malaysia, 25–29 October 1999, estimated that 5 to 7 million people are now living with HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

The real HIV/AIDS picture in Southeast Asia is mixed. While infection remains relatively low in several Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, higher levels of HIV cases appear in countries like Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

The situation is bleakest in Cambodia, where one in twenty pregnant women, one in sixteen soldiers and policemen and one in two sex workers have tested positive in a sentinel HIV surveillance. Vietnam and Myanmar,

which have long considered themselves isolated from the social ills of the outside world, are also seeing a rapid spread of HIV. In Vietnam, the number of those with HIV or full-blown AIDS is around 90,000. In Myanmar, there are about 440,000 people with HIV/AIDS out of a population of about 48 million. There may be more than 1.2 million cases of HIV in mainland China in the year 2000.

Considering the seriousness and urgency of the HIV/AIDS problems in the Mekong Sub-region, the Christian Conference of Asia initiated an educational program on this issue. The Development and Service Unit of CCA, in cooperation with the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) AIDS Ministry and



Sharing stories on HIV/AIDS concerns at Santisuk Church, Thailand

with participation of the Chiang Rai Public Health Office, organised a Training Workshop on Pastoral Ministry on HIV/AIDS Concerns of Churches in the Mekong Sub-Region. The program was held 19–25 September 1999 in Chiang Rai, a province bordering on Myanmar and Laos. Its purpose was to strengthen the participating churches' capability to pursue their holistic mission in the Mekong Sub-region area.

Twenty-three participants—from China, Myanmar, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Thailand—participated in the program. Eight resource persons and facilitators from Thailand and one from the Philippines were invited.

The program also provided a basis for church workers in the Mekong Sub-region for making comprehensive

and critical analysis for discussing HIV/AIDS prevention and control in the Christian perspective. It was also designed to facilitate a better understanding and exchange of information among the participants and to reinforce participants' attitudes, knowledge and skills concerning protection and control of HIV/AIDS in their respective countries.

In his welcoming address, Rev. Dr Sint Kimhachandra, the General Secretary of the Church of Christ in Thailand, mentioned that, 'HIV/AIDS is an international issue and is our concern.' He also expressed that the Church of Christ in Thailand would be very happy to share its experience as well as its human/personnel resources with neighbouring countries to tackle the issue. Led by Dr Somsak Supawitkul, doctors from the Chiang

Rai Public Health Office presented HIV/AIDS problems and causes, and gave an account of the prevention and control policy of the government in the Mekong Sub-region.

Rev. Sanan Wutti, head of the CCT AIDS Ministry, shared his experience, which focuses on two fundamental questions: whether the church has a mission with regard to people with AIDS (PWAs); and how we, the churches, deal with PWA issues.

Ms Somthong Srisudhiwong facilitated the discussion on guidelines for future action on HIV/AIDS concerns of churches in the Mekong Sub-region. She listed nine steps of the project planning cycle:

- Step 1: Analyse problems and solutions (should be participatory).
- Step 2: Assess organisational strengths and opportunities.
- Step 3: Define project objectives and outputs.
- Step 4: Develop performance targets and indicators.
- Step 5: Define outputs, strategies and activities.
- Step 6: Prepare an implementation schedule.
- Step 7: Prepare a budget.
- Step 8: Plan monitoring and evaluation.
- Step 9: Implementation of the project.

During the program, participants were able to visit five groups and organisations working on HIV/AIDS issues, including churches, public hospitals, and community groups and organisations in Chiang Rai Province.

Prawate Khid-arn



Distributing herbal medicines made on the premises at Santisuk Church, Thailand

National Youth Secretaries Coordinators Meeting

Thirteen national representatives along with two Youth Committee members and staff met in Hong Kong, 22–28 November 1999.

Their intentions were twofold:
strategising the youth program and skills training

The most important results from this meeting were the repositioning of the CCA Youth role and setting priorities in the Asian Ecumenical Youth Movement. First, the participants asked CCA Youth to strengthen its communication with national youth coordinators and committees. Their desire was that CCA Youth should foster a teamwork spirit among its members. Although there is regular and direct communication among the youth network, participants decided that to better carry out this task, a CCA Youth Network newsletter should be distributed regularly to its members.

Participants also discussed how CCA Youth may work better to fulfil its task in ecumenical formation. One of the suggestions was to strengthen the internship program. Starting from next year, there will be one intern working specifically on the General Assembly to coordinate the pre-assembly youth forum. Another intern, starting from mid next year, will be working on summing up the 'Reading the Bible Through Asian Eyes' series. This intern will also be working on another worship and resource gathering book called *On Earth As in Heaven*. Both interns will be based in CCA Centre,

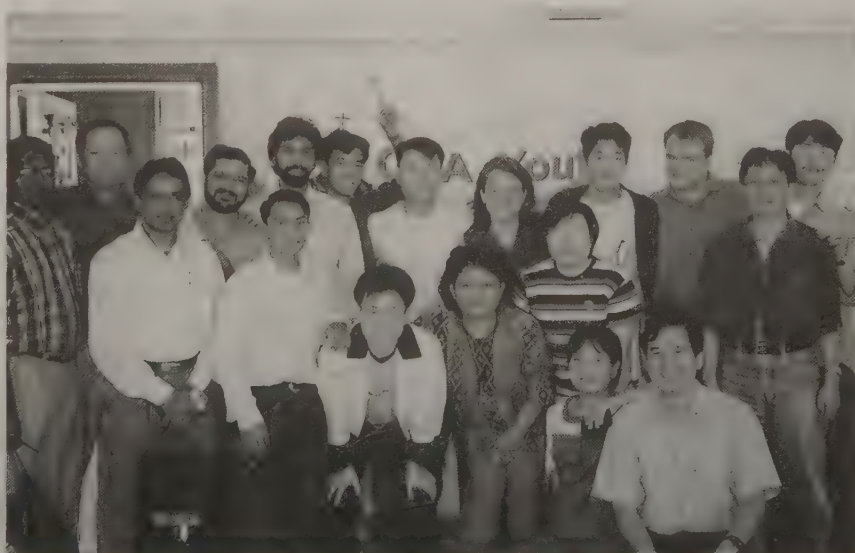
Hong Kong. During this meeting, the youth secretaries also planned the coming sub-regional programs on peace issues in South Asia and North East Asia.

This process is allowing them to become more involved in CCA youth work. The national representatives discussed their national youth movements and identified common problems and trends. Freddy Knutsen, the Youth Secretary of World Council of Churches, served as resource person. He introduced the regional focus and the new framework that has been drawn up for the world youth program.

The meeting also invited Emmanuel Ilagan to share methods of effective proposal and report writing, a matter which is an important part of everyone's work.

The meeting was also a time for fellowship. Participants visited ecumenical youth organisations that are based in Hong Kong. The meeting with old friends of CCA Youth was a Hong Kong cultural experience in itself, giving participants exposure to snake soup. Members also made exchanges and networked among themselves for developing future collaboration.

Cynthia Yuen



Participants at the National Youth Secretaries Coordinators Meeting

Training Workshop on Saving and Sharing

Strengthening the people's managed program for church and community workers in South Asia

The World Summit on 'Social Development' in 1995 highlighted poverty, unemployment and social integration as key issues for moving into the twenty-first century. Its core concern was micro-credit as an important instrument to eliminate poverty and create jobs. In the effort to eliminate poverty, create jobs and income-generating programs among the poor, micro-credit is considered to be an instrument that enables marginalised people to obtain access to, or to extend their control over, resources.

But in many cases, the push for micro-credit has problems. This push frequently comes from above, where control still remains in the hands of the powerful, and not from the people. Credit, from the development perspective, is much more than just provisions of funds or micro-credit activities that ignore people's savings. Neglect of people's saving potential has often had a negative impact on credit problems.

More importantly, saving is not only a prerequisite for issuing loans, it is also a means to develop social responsibility, a sense of self-ownership, self-reliance and a sustainable development program.

A challenging question for when the church involves itself in savings and micro-credit activities is, 'Is the church able to handle this program?' If the answer is, 'Yes,' what are strategies and mechanisms to be used? What

are some problems and difficulties to be faced? And what are the lessons the church can learn from operating savings and micro-credit activities?

In this context, the Christian Conference of Asia Development and Service desk, in cooperation with the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) and the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB), conducted a 'Training Workshop on Community-based Sav-

A challenging question when the church involves itself in savings and micro-credit activities is, 'Is the church able to handle this program?' If the answer is, 'Yes,' what are strategies and mechanisms to be used? What are some problems and difficulties to be faced? What are the lessons the church can learn from operating savings and micro-credit activities?

ings and Credit: Strengthening People's Managed Program for Church and Community Workers in South Asia'. The program was held at CCDB Training Hall, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2-9 October 1999. It involved theological discussion, evaluation and exchange of ideas and experiences, and searching for possible ways of the church's participation for improving the quality of life of the poor. Twenty-three participants representing CCA member

churches and councils in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines and Korea attended the program.

Pastor Mario Latido from the Philippines facilitated the discussion on 'development from the Biblical perspective'. He emphasised that the church is the 'fellowship (*koinonia*) of the believers and followers of Christ' (Acts 2:42-47). Savings from this viewpoint is stewardship that recognises that God is the source of life and all of its blessings. Savings and credit, then, is a tool for social transformation and change.

The participants held a further discussion on the fundamental questions, 'Can the poor (personally) save? Why? How?' It was agreed that a savings system can produce consciousness raising of people even though they are very poor. Women in general are more active and disciplined participants in savings and micro-credit systems. In Bangladesh, savings systems have the goal of organising women to raise their living standard, and to empower and socially uplift the poor.

Participants from the Philippines posed the question, 'Is the church the right place for savings and credit?' Many controversial topics were raised that involved theological points of view as well as the issue of economic justice, especially in dealing with loans, repayments and an interest rates.

A consensus of the participants was that the problem of whether or not the

church should be involved in savings and credit activities was not the main issue. Their question was rather how was the church to be involved and what were the appropriate strategies and mechanisms for the church in dealing with these issues.

Some problems in financial management that were indicated include:

- borrowing money without any definite purpose,
- borrowing too much or too little money,
- wrong timing of release of borrowed money,
- borrowing at very high interest rates,
- inability to pay maturing debts,
- cash not available when needed,
- excessive idle cash,
- relatively low income from invested idle funds;
- delays and/or inadequate financial reports submitted to management,
- frequent cash shortage, misappropriation and irregularities.

Prawate Khid-arn

Gender Awareness in Church Ministry

A training workshop, 'Gender Awareness: Women and Men in Church Ministry in Thailand', was organised by the Christian Women Department of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) in collaboration with the Christian Conference of Asia. It was held at the Thai-Korean

Mission Center, Lamphun, in the northern part of Thailand, 3-6 October 1999. About sixty church leaders attended the workshop. Participants discussed how to raise awareness and strengthen the role of women in social activities. They searched for strategies and a practical plan of action to

promote closer collaboration between women and men in church and community works in Thailand.

The workshop was also part of the preparation towards the CCA Conference on Gender and Development held in Malaysia in December 1999.

Prawate Khid-arn



Kampuchea Christian Council General Assembly

The Second General Assembly of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) in Cambodia was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 14–15 October 1999 and elected new officers and a new executive committee of the KCC. Mr Pen Sorithy, a pastor, has been elected as the new President and Mr Smak Sothy Sothera has been made the new General Secretary of the Council. Mr Sothera is a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. He is the first Cambodian to be theologically trained in the post-Pol Pot era. The churches in Cambodia have been in fellowship with the CCA since 1993. The ecumenical structure at the national level was inaugurated



General Council of the Kampuchea Christian Council

two years ago. KCC has been developed into the national ecumenical forum for

most of the Cambodian churches and local church-related organisations.

GLOBAL CURRENTS

Joint CCA–WCC Working Group Meeting



CCA–WCC Joint Working Group meeting in Colombo

The second meeting of the joint CCA–WCC Working Group was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 9–10 September 1999. It was attended by eight members, four from each organisation. Representatives from WCC were Bishop Dr Zacharias Mar Theophilus, India (WCC Executive Committee), Ms Keshini I. Arulendran, Sri Lanka (WCC Central Committee), Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri from Malaysia (WCC Central Committee) and Mr Hubert van Beck, WCC Executive Staff for Church and Ecumenical Relations. Representatives from CCA were Bishop Kenneth Fernando, Sri Lanka (CCA Presidium), Dr Feliciano Cariño, Philippines (CCA General Secre-

tary), Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat, Indonesia (CCA Associate General Secretary for Program Coordination) and Dr Mathews George Chunakara (Executive Secretary for Indochina and International Affairs).

The agenda of the meeting included WCC post-Harare and the three-year plan, CCA Assembly in June 2000, the possibility of a regional emphasis on Asia in a future WCC Central Committee meeting and sharing programs of

both institutions, including their areas of ongoing cooperation. In the spirit of developing mutual cooperation, the need to have a consultation between the two bodies not only for the implementation of programs, but also for planning and decision making was strongly underlined. In response to the ongoing tensions in Indonesia and the problem of East Timor, the two bodies, in consultation with the Commission of Churches in Indonesia, decided

to develop a coordinated ecumenical response. The result was the Indonesia Roundtable meeting sponsored by CCA and WCC held in Hong Kong, 11–14 November 1999. Its purpose was to listen to the concerns of East Timorese and Indonesian churches and express ecumenical solidarity with the churches and the people of East Timor and Indonesia in this difficult time.

Henriette Hutabarat

WCC Themes for the Future

Following recommendations made at its Central Committee meeting in Geneva, 26 August – 3 September, the World Council of Churches will stress ‘being church’, ‘caring for life’, ‘ministry of reconciliation’ and ‘common witness and service’ as essential to its work in years to come. Some of these themes were discussed in the early days of the ecumenical movement, while others emerged at the WCC’s assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.

‘Being the church,’ said a report from the WCC’s program committee, ‘calls for an “inclusive community” that gives visibility and increased participation to many who have been marginalised in the life of the church.’ These include women, youth, children, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

The WCC should encourage ‘safe arenas for dialogue’ and full participation by all in the ecumenical endeavour, the report said. It added that the call for an inclusive community also ‘challenges churches divided by racial

and/or ethnic identity’. The program committee asked that WCC programs ‘care for life’ and called for emphasis on a ‘life-centred ethic, the culture of peace and non-violence, and upholding the rights and dignity of people’. It stated that while such an emphasis was part of previous WCC work, ‘new attention is needed to the spiritual dimensions of caring for life, particularly as these relate to ethical questions arising from bio-technology, birth control, abortion, and human sexuality.’

Citing the theme of the recent WCC assembly—‘Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope’—the committee asked that WCC work be inspired by the theme of ‘ministry of reconciliation’, which focuses on spirituality. ‘The unity and reconciliation we seek can only be found when centred in worship, prayer, a shared spiritual life and shared community,’ it said.

According to the report, globalisation is a theological and spiritual challenge. The committee suggested that the WCC and its member churches focus on ‘common witness and serv-

ice’ in the midst of emerging global economies. The WCC should also concern itself with the ‘growth of religious plurality’ and ‘changing understandings of mission and evangelism’, including concern about religious freedom and proselytising across Christian denominations. The WCC should expand talks with partners of other religious bodies on how ‘common commitments to human rights and dignity can be translated into a global framework of values to which we can all subscribe’.

The report said that the WCC assembly’s call for a Decade to Overcome Violence, another emphasis in the years to come, ‘encourages our churches to challenge the powers and principalities that perpetuate violence in our world’. It also called on the WCC to work with member churches and others to create a ‘culture of non-violence’.

The program committee’s recommendations were overwhelmingly approved by the Central Committee.

WCC

Mathews George Chunakara to be WCC Asia Secretary



Mathews George Chunakara

The World Council of Churches Central Committee has appointed Dr Mathews George Chunakara to be the WCC's Executive Secretary for Regional Relations in Asia. Mathews George has been serving CCA since 1993, where he is currently Executive Secretary and Coordinator for International Affairs and Indochina Concerns.

The Executive Committee of CCA meeting in November congratulated Mathews George and extended best wishes to him upon his new appointment. Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary of CCA, said in his report to the executive committee, 'In assuming this post, Mathews takes over the post that our friend and colleague, Park Kyung Seo, has occupied for nearly eighteen years. In this position, Mathews will be one of the main hubs of WCC's relations with CCA and with other constituencies in Asia.'

Mathews George, a lay member of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India, has been actively involved in the Indian and Asian Ecumenical Move-

ment for more than two decades. He was involved in the national leadership of the Student Christian Movement in India, the National Council of Churches in India and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India. He was a member of the Executive Committee and of different subcommittees of the NCC India for several years. He served as Associate Director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre in Whitefield, Bangalore, India, an internationally renowned ecumenical study and training centre, before joining CCA. He has been closely associated with CCA since 1981 through the Youth and International Affairs program units. His contributions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for human resource development in church and society, and in establishing relations between churches and governments have been noteworthy. Mathews George holds a PhD in International Relations. He has written and published extensively on Asian politics and human rights. His book *Militarisation of Politics: South East Asian Experiences* has been widely recognised. Mathews and his wife Gigi have two children, Deepak and Roopa. The CCA family extends all good wishes to him as he takes up this important task.

Cynthia Yuen New CCA Youth Secretary

Ms Cynthia Yuen, an Anglican lay person, joined CCA Staff on 15 September 1999 as Acting Executive Secretary for Youth Concerns. She assumes primary responsibility for coordinating the youth

programs and organising the Students and Youth Asian Gathering 2000. Cynthia has served as General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of Hong Kong and has worked on the staff of various Hong Kong-based organisations. She has been an executive committee member of WSCF for the last four years and has wide experience in the Asian ecumenical scene, especially in regional training, student and youth empowerment and women's training. Cynthia Yuen received her BA degree and Masters in Sociology from the University of Hong Kong.



Cynthia Yuen

New General Secretary for NCCUSA

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America has unanimously elected a former member of Congress, Robert W. Edgar, as its new general secretary. The appointment has generally been well received, with many hoping that Edgar will have the skills and strength of character to solve some of the major problems facing the NCCC, which is the biggest ecumeni-

cal organisation in the USA and a key player in the international ecumenical network. Edgar, who is president of the Claremont School of Theology in California, served in the US Congress at the same time as the new NCC president Andrew Young, during the 1970s and 80s. Before he was elected to Congress, Edgar was chaplain at Drexel University in Philadelphia and, at the same time, was associate pastor at Lansdowne United Methodist Church in suburban Philadelphia. Edgar said his leadership style was marked by a sense of humour, optimism and a desire to build coalitions with like-minded groups. Edgar suggested that a positive outlook and respect for diversity while celebrating unity were necessary for the renewal of the 50-year-old organisation, which has thirty-five member churches (mainstream Protestant and Orthodox) representing 52 million Christians.

Ecumenical News International

New Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan has been consecrated as the Twentieth Mar Thoma of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India, which is the See of St Thomas the Apostle (the Mar Thoma Metropolitan is believed to be the successor of St Thomas). Mar Chrysostom has been the Officiating Metropolitan of the Church since Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, the Nineteenth Mar Thoma of the Church, resigned from active service early this year. Mar Chrysostom was consecrated by all



bishops of the Mar Thoma Church in the presence of several bishops of sister churches in India in a solemn service at a specially built altar in a public stadium at Tiruvalla. Thousands of people, including hundreds of clergy, attended the consecration service and the felicitation meeting held in the southern state of Kerala in India. Mar Chrysostom was actively involved in CCA in 1960s and 1970s through its programs of church and society. He was a member of the Church and Society Program Committee of CCA and a delegate to CCA assemblies in Penang and Singapore. He was President of the National Council of Churches in India and served the Indian ecumenical movement in various capacities.

Kerala has been considered the citadel of ancient Christianity in India, the place where Christianity was introduced in 52 AD by St Thomas. The Malankara Church was the only church in India until the coming of Roman Catholic missionaries from Portugal in the early fifteenth century. The church in Kerala remained as a unified indigenous church until that time, but has undergone divisions in successive years due to foreign influences. The

Mar Thoma Church is often described as a bridge between Eastern and Western traditions. In its liturgy and in the social life of its community, the Mar Thoma Church retains its original Eastern forms and traditions.

NCCP Elects First Woman General Secretary

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) has elected Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz Duremdez, a lay leader of the Convention of the Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC), as its general secretary. She is the first woman to hold the post.

Ms Duremdez succeeds Bishop Roman Tipples, Jr, whose term ends this year. Also elected were Bishop Tomas Millamena, Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) as chairperson, Dr Leo Soriano of the United Methodist Church (UMC), Ms Karen Muniasque of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and Dr Fe Villao of the Iglesia Evangelica Metodista En Las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF) as vice chairpersons, and Rev. Mequias R. Camba, Jr (UCCP) as treasurer. Ms Duremdez is a sought-after lecturer on women's issues. She holds a bachelor's degree in speech and communication and a Master of Religious Education. She taught at the College of Theology of the Central Philippine University in Iloilo.

The NCCP is a fellowship of churches composed of eleven mainstream Protestant and non-Roman Catholic churches and eleven church-related institutions and organisations.

Park Kyung Seo Departs WCC

Dr Park Kyung Seo, Asia Secretary of the World Council of Churches, will leave his position at WCC by December of this year.

Park Kyung Seo has been working for WCC for the past eighteen years. Throughout his service in WCC, he has shown his ecumenical commitment, dedication, courage and fortitude, along with his concern for the marginalised and oppressed people in Asia. His contribution to peace and reconciliation efforts in the war-torn Korean peninsula has been greatly appreciated by the ecumenical family around the world. He has successfully coordinated the resource sharing efforts of the worldwide ecumenical community, which have helped many churches and ecumenical organisations in Asia.

He has forged ahead with and focused on the roundtables in Asia, which have been crucial to his leadership. He has also been a successful negotiator in working with both ecumenical partners and local groups and churches.



At a farewell dinner CCA General Secretary, Dr Feliciano V. Cariño makes a presentation to Dr Park Kyung Seo as he relinquishes his post with the World Council of Churches

Park Kyung Seo will be undertaking a position as Special Adviser to the South Korean Government concerning Korean unification. He will also be the director of the North East

Asia Peace Institute in Seoul. The Christian Conference of Asia expressly organised a farewell dinner for Park Kyung Seo and thanked him for his contributions to CCA's life and witness over the past several years.

Forthcoming CCA Events

Dates for Meetings towards the CCA General Assembly 2000

Youth Pre-Assembly Meeting	27-30 May	The Extraordinary Assembly on	
Orientation for Assembly Stewards	31 May	Constitutional Amendments	Morning of 1 June
Women's Pre-Assembly Meeting	27-30 May	Opening Ceremony	Afternoon of 1 June
People's Forum	27-30 May	The Eleventh General Assembly	
CCA Executive Committee Meeting	30 May	Meeting	2-6 June
CCA General Committee Meeting	31 May	Asia Ecumenical Course	12 May - 12 June

These events will be held in and around Tomohon, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, the site of the CCA General Assembly.

Holy Family in Saffron



Frank Wesley

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Luke 2:39–40

A golden circle surrounds the holy child, who is curled into Mary's silk-covered arm. His small clenched fist, held up towards his mother, clutches a spot of red, a sign of the stigmata, the nail holes which will one day pierce his hands.

Light reflecting from the child illuminates the mother's face as she bends over her infant. Her jewellery, carefully defined in style, is that of an unsophisticated village woman. Colour contrast is utilised to emphasise the male and female in a typical Indian style.

The hair of the father knotted high on one side of his head is bound by a saffron cloth and the silver ring in his ear is in the manner reminiscent of the Gopalkrishna, cow-herder and simple country boy. With the symbolic

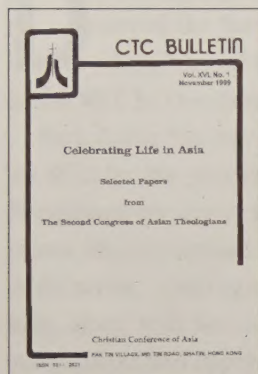
hand gesture for holding, he lifts the sari to see the child more closely.

The bowed heads of the parents complete the circle of love which surrounds them and their child. The glow of golden saffron suffusing the painting reminds us of the willing sacrifice of their lives in the parenting of this holy child.

The Lucknow technique and Bengal renaissance style are seen in the facial features limned with delicacy, the slender nose, bowed lips, graceful hands beautiful clothing and delicate colours.

—from *Frank Wesley: Exploring Faith with a Brush* by Naomi Wray, published by Pace Publishing (Watercolour, 16 x 21 cm, Gould collection)

New Publications



CTC Bulletin Vol. XVI, No. 1 November 1999

This issue of *CTC Bulletin* contains selected papers presented at the Second Congress of Asian Theologians, which was held in

Bangalore, India, in August 1999. The conference was organised by CCA. The papers are organised under the headings of three of the themes of CATS II: 'Celebrating Life in Asia', 'Life in Asia in the Age of Globalisation' and 'Religious and Cultural Plurality'.

Note: *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (December 1999) will be published shortly as will the Proceedings of the Second Congress of Asian Theologians.

Festschrift for Feliciano Cariño

Ecumenism in Asia
Essays in Honour of Feliciano Cariño
Edited by K.C. Abraham
Published by ATESEA/BTE-SSC

This volume consists of a series of essays in honour of Dr Feliciano Cariño in commemoration of his sixtieth birthday and was issued at the Second Congress of Asian Theologians. Dr Cariño, or Fely, as he is known to friends and colleagues, has influenced the course of ecumenical thinking with his forthright and clear contributions, which are widely recognised not only in Asia, but all over the world.

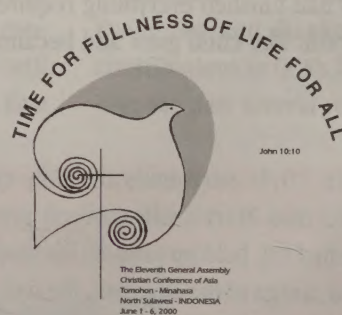
Copies of this book are available through Dr K.C. Abraham, SATHRI, 57 Miller's Road, Bangalore 560 046, India (tel: 91 80 554-2868, fax: 91 80 577-0274, email: sathri@mantraonline.com).

Asia Ecumenical Committee Meeting

The third meeting of the Asia Ecumenical Committee, a joint committee of CCA and FABC, was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1-3 December 1999. The agenda of the committee included:

- reviewing the implementation of the programs and forms of cooperation since 1996,
- discussing ecumenical issues and themes for the CCA Assembly 2000 and the FABC Assembly 2000,
- preparing a proposal on the future direction of cooperation between CCA and FABC. The proposal on "Towards Collaboration for the New Century" will be presented to the assemblies of both bodies in the year 2000.

Henriette Hutabarat



"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
(John 10:10)

*Have a Joyous Christmas
and a Blessed New Year*

With best wishes from Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary,
and the staff of the Christian Conference of Asia

Ecumenical and Interfaith Cooperation against Rising Japanese Militarism and Nuclear Power Build-up

A Report from NCCJ

The National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) has committed itself through ecumenical and interfaith opposition campaigns to deal with two major trends in Japan: rising militarism and the build-up of nuclear power plants.

Together with the rest of the Christian community in the country, we have expressed our determination to say 'no' to the recent trend in Japan towards militarism and war build up.

Our recent work in this area includes campaigns against the Diet's passage of bills such as the New Guidelines Bills for US-Japan Defence Cooperation, passed on 24 May 1999. This will enable Japan to provide rear support to war actions by the US military in unspecified 'surrounding areas' of the country. We also campaigned against the bill that on 9 August 1999 legalised the Sun Flag and the Kimigayo Imperial anthem as the national flag and the national anthem.

Our ecumenical and interfaith campaigns, which are also against the New Guidelines Bills, played a key role in bringing together people from different walks of life such as some Buddhists, civic groups, labour unions and women's groups. Those campaigns have been well appreciated by the rest of the people. This was visibly demon-

strated by the rally—in which the NCCJ constituted a central part—that was held against the New Guidelines Bills in Tokyo on 21 May 1999. There were approximately 50,000 participants.

Despite the fact that the bills mentioned above have already been enacted by the Diet, we will continue our efforts for peace. We will continue to oppose the enactment of wartime emergency bills, armed participation by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and the revision of the present

Our efforts to promote peace involves ecumenical and interfaith cooperation to promote concrete actions so that Japan will not repeat the mistakes of the past

peace Constitution of Japan that currently renounces war and armed forces. All of these efforts are expected to take place in the coming three to five years.

To that end, NCCJ has initiated the Christian Network for Peace—a nationwide network of Christians in Japan that includes Catholics, evangelicals, NCCJ member churches, organisations and groups, as well as a few non-member churches—which

adheres to the peace constitution of Japan.

We would like to work together on this issue with the WCC and CCA as part of their concern for peace and security. We intend to cooperate on this issue with the NCC in Korea.

Another major ongoing concern has been our opposition to nuclear power plants on the grounds that nuclear power was and can be used for lethal weapons in wars, and that it is harmful to the environment. This was shown by Japan's worst-ever criticality accident at a uranium processing plant of JCO Ltd, Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, on 30 September 1999. This accident acutely injured three workers, released a large amount of radioactivity into the atmosphere and pushed radiation levels up to 16,000 times beyond normal. Again, these efforts have been made through our campaigns with other religions in the Religionists Association for Reviewing of Nuclear Power Policy.

Consequently, our efforts to promote peace and to create a nuclear power-free Japan are examples of more than ecumenism and of interfaith dialogue—they involve ecumenical and interfaith cooperation to promote concrete actions so that Japan will not repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Road to Tomohon

We are privileged to host the CCA Assembly. We welcome this important gathering and we will share our hospitality not in the glamorous hotel, but in our homes. This is a way for us to express our faith, which is shared by the CCA family, namely to be and to live in solidarity with people of Asia.

—Dr W.A. Roeroe, Moderator of GMIM Synod

Rev. Dr Richard Siwu, the Vice-Chairperson of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), was at the CCA Centre on 18 November to discuss the preparation of the Assembly with the CCA staff. He said that the local committee, which was formed by the GMIM Synod, has begun the renovation of 'Bukit Inspirasi' (Inspiration Hill) Hall for the use of the Assembly. This hall is located in a hill facing Mt Lokon, which is a local landmark. The hall was built in 1980 for the Assembly of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and can hold up to 1,200 comfortably. The renovation of the hall is scheduled to be completed by April 2000 and it will also be used by GMIM to hold their Synod Assembly.

In addition to the renovation of the main conference hall, the local committee is building facilities around the hall for the Assembly secretariat, communications (telephone, fax, email and Internet cafe) and bank and travel agent services.

Dr Siwu shared the enthusiasm of the local committee and the members of the GMIM to receive the delegates of the CCA Assembly. GMIM has hosted many church meetings, including their own Assemblies, which are usually attended by a large number of participants (between 1,500 to 2,000 people) and the PGI Assembly

in 1980, which was attended by 1,200 people. But GMIM is especially proud to host the CCA Assembly as it is an international gathering.

GMIM will take care of the accommodation, meals and local transportation of all participants during the Assembly. Members of the congregations will offer their houses to accommodate participants. Breakfast will be served in the houses while lunch and dinner will be in the dining hall next to the conference hall. The local host committee will welcome the participants at the airport and take care of the transportation from Sam Ratulangi international airport in Manado to Tomohon (about 45 minutes drive). The committee will be also responsible for returning the participants to the airport. Shuttle mini-buses will transport participants between their accommodation and the Assembly Hall so that they may be present for the Assembly sessions and programs.

There are some hotels in Tomohon for those who prefer such facilities. However, those who choose to stay in hotels will need to take care of their own hotel bills.

Tomohon is located on a hillside, about 30 km from Manado, the capital city of North Sulawesi Province. It is the headquarters of the Protestant Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM).

Henriette Hutabarat

